

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 8 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A1

--This application ~~claims the benefit~~ is a continuation-in-part of: U.S. Patent Application No. 09/205,809 filed December 4, 1998 (U.S. Patent No. 6,324,183) (~~pending~~); and further claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/127,889 filed April 5, 1999, and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/137,988 filed June 7, 1999, the disclosures of each of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 28, line 8 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A2

--Although the flow charts in Figures 19 and 20 respectively show the addition and removal of TCP transport layer information from an SS7 user part message, the present invention is not limited to such an embodiment. For example, in an alternative embodiment, ~~and~~ an SS7 user part message can be encapsulated in a UDP/IP message for transmission over a UDP/IP network. Similarly, UDP/IP-encapsulated SS7 user part messages can be received over a UDP/IP network and the UDP/IP portion of the messages can be removed to produce the SS7 user part messages.--